

HALL OF RECORDS  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

# Fifteenth Annual Report

MARYLAND STATE BOARD

OF

MOTION PICTURE CENSORS



1930-1931

OFFICES

211 NORTH CALVERT STREET

BALTIMORE - MARYLAND

Fifteenth Annual Report

MARYLAND STATE BOARD

of

MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

1930-1931

GEORGE HELLER  
Chairman

ASA C. SHARP  
Vice-Chairman and Treasurer

MARIE WHITE PRESSTMAN  
Secretary

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HELEN L. ODOM  
Chief Clerk

OFFICES

211 NORTH CALVERT STREET  
BALTIMORE - MARYLAND

*To His Excellency,*

HONORABLE ALBERT C. RITCHIE,

Governor of Maryland.

**A**NOTHER YEAR of official work has been completed, and in pursuance of law and custom we are now transmitting to you a report of the business and proceedings of the State Board of Motion Picture Censors during the period beginning October 1, 1930, and ending September 30, 1931.

The report is accompanied by an itemized statement of all receipts and disbursements of this department during the fiscal year ending September 30, 1931, and the results of films examined for the same period.

#### OPERATIONS OF THE BOARD

The Board reviewed 5,665,542 feet of film in the past year. In addition 19,352,207 feet of duplicate film passed through the offices. Compared with the previous year there was a loss of 1,881,491 feet in original films, and an increase of 1,491,891 feet in duplicate films submitted to the Board.

A decrease of \$3,709.13 in revenue for the year resulted, the total receipts from fees amounting to \$35,245.85, as compared with \$38,954.98 in 1930. Total expenses for the year were \$31,816.79.

A review of the work of the year compared with the preceding year reveals *no* improvement in the moral quality of the motion pictures submitted for censorship. The Board ordered cuts in 403 films as compared with 148 films the previous year. Five pictures were rejected on first screening. Reconstructed prints of each were finally passed.

The dramas reviewed numbered 2,436. Newsreels predominated over all other classifications, numbering 3,224. Films subversive to morals predominated in the drama classification.

#### PROSECUTIONS

In two instances the Board instituted prosecutions for violations of the law. No other wilful violations were brought to the

attention of the office. On the whole, the exhibitors showed a desire to cooperate, and the exchanges generally are complying with requirements.

#### LEGISLATIVE ACTION

The General Assembly of 1931 passed a Resolution (No. 15) condemning the type of films exhibited in the State, and requested the Board to "prohibit the exhibition of all moving pictures having a plot, tone or character which is degrading, indecent or salacious, and which tend to glorify vice and marital infidelity and to make light of all high ideals."

The Legislature in its appropriations for 1932 included a refund of \$2,294.00 for license fees paid on duplicate films which had never been submitted for censorship. The above fees covered a period of four years' operations.

#### APPEAL TO COURT

The action of the Board was overruled in the only appeal taken to the Baltimore City Court from the final judgment of the Board. The film, entitled "Birth," was appealed from an order of the Board practically rejecting the subject. The Board's order was overruled and the film passed in its entirety by the Court. The subject of the film was ABORTION, *legal* and *illegal*.

#### STANDARDS

Now that the sound film has entirely claimed the industry\* for its own, the question of the control of sound under the present statutes has apparently been solved. No legal action protesting the right of the Maryland Board of Censors to exercise such control has been taken to Court. By either explicit direction or implication the control of sound produced by mechanical device is in effect wherever censorship of motion pictures exists.

As the voice is a more subtle means of expression than either printed caption or pictured action, the censors have been confronted with an ever increasing difficulty because of the smutty jokes, wise cracks and Broadway vernacular in which the talkies abound. There is evidence of a quite deplorable appreciation of this type of picture among regular theatre patrons, and the producers have not hesitated to capitalize this popularity.

The Board has made efforts to restrict the spoken indecencies of the screen and to apply the provisions of Section 6, Article 66-A, to the language as well as the picturization of the films examined.

The Board, under the law, does not designate films suitable for children. Some regulation of the attendance of minors seems to be increasingly necessary by reason of the unwholesome character of many of the films on view. Marital infidelity, bootlegging, banditry and prostitution are the subjects too commonly dealt with and undoubtedly leave an undesirable impression on persons lacking in judgment and maturity of thought. In many of the films sex is overemphasized, licentiousness and crime exaggerated, and truth distorted. Frank discussion of sex is the order of the day.

With some notable exceptions, the moral quality of the films is far from satisfactory, and constantly changing standards of moral conduct and public opinion are making difficult, if not well-nigh impossible, the control of films tending to inculcate a lower outlook on life.

Respectfully submitted,

GEORGE HELLER, *Chairman*  
ASA C. SHARP, *Vice-Chairman*  
MARIE W. PRESSTMAN, *Secretary*

December 31, 1931

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

BUDGET ACCOUNT  
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

For fiscal year ended September 30, 1931

Receipts

Balance, September 30, 1930.....	\$400.00	
State Treasurer, Direct.....	\$25,616.83	
State Treasurer, through Comptroller.....	6,199.96	
	<u>31,816.79</u>	\$32,216.79

Disbursements

Salaries and Wages.....	\$21,205.82	
General Repairs.....	30.00	
Heat, Light and Power.....	350.95	
Traveling.....	644.41	
Communication.....	337.60	
Office Supplies and Stationery.....	242.32	
Printing.....	128.50	
Motion Picture Machine Supplies.....	111.62	
Office Equipment.....	66.32	
Motion Picture Machine Equipment.....	69.29	
Rent.....	2,400.00	
Insurance.....	30.00	
	<u>\$25,616.83</u>	

Paid Through Comptroller

Salaries and Wages.....	\$4,210.18	
Office Supplies and Stationery (C. P. B.).....	7.91	
Printing.....	112.50	
Film Approval Seals.....	1,592.00	
Motion Picture Machine Supplies (C. P. B.).....	9.60	
Office Equipment.....	116.37	
Motion Picture Machine Equipment.....	151.40	
	<u>6,199.96</u>	
		<u>31,816.79</u>
Balance, September 30, 1931.....		\$400.00

## MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

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### STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

For fiscal year ended September 30, 1931

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#### Receipts

Fees, Censorship (Original Feet 5,665,542) .....	\$12,770.00
Fees, Censorship (Duplicate Feet 19, 352,207) .....	21,443.00
Sale of Substitute Seals (950) at \$1.00 .....	950.00
Fines .....	10.00
Telephone Calls .....	21.00
Refund, Traveling Expenses .....	26.56
Interest on Deposit .....	25.29
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	\$35,245.85

#### Disbursements

Remitted to State Treasurer .....	\$35,245.85
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#### Bank Reconciliation

Union Trust Company:	
Balance, September 30, 1931 .....	\$3,114.66
Check No. 109 Remitted to Treasurer, Outstanding....	3,114.66

**MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS**  
**REPORT OF FILMS EXAMINED**

**OCTOBER 1, 1930—SEPTEMBER 30, 1931**

	Films Original	Films Duplicate	Reels Original	Reels Duplicate	No. of Feet Original	No. of Feet Duplicate	Films Approved	Films Rejected	Films Eliminated
October . . .	243	582	680	1,859	586,108	1,520,148	809	0	16
November . .	234	609	594	1,893	479,839	1,592,193	833	0	10
December . .	221	621	525	1,951	436,219	1,627,172	831	0	11
January . . .	247	592	652	1,794	565,966	1,519,108	823	0	16
February . .	200	606	427	2,028	445,859	1,705,258	791	0	15
March . . . .	207	674	573	2,315	477,614	1,942,705	859	0	22
April . . . . .	200	620	561	2,035	481,574	1,709,240	760	0	60
May . . . . .	181	540	465	1,752	393,395	1,473,327	654	3	64
June . . . . .	173	531	459	1,781	387,946	1,506,158	636	0	68
July . . . . .	220	570	556	1,785	472,576	1,530,918	733	*1	56
August . . . .	187	580	504	1,764	434,635	1,496,379	730	*1	36
September . .	220	630	490	2,021	503,811	1,729,601	821	0	29
	2,533	7,155	6,486	22,978	5,665,542	19,352,207	9,280	*5	403

\*Five films later passed in reconstructed form.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

Films, Original . . . . .	2,533			
Films, Duplicate . . . . .	7,155			
Reels, Original . . . . .		6,486		
Reels, Duplicate . . . . .		22,978		
Number of Feet, Original . . . . .			5,665,542	
Number of Feet, Duplicate . . . . .			19,352,207	
Films Approved . . . . .				9,280
Films Rejected . . . . .				5
Films Eliminated . . . . .				403
	9,688	29,464	25,017,749	9,688



**CLASSIFICATION OF FILMS**  
**OCTOBER 1, 1930—SEPTEMBER 30, 1931**

	Dramas	Comedies	News	Cartoons	Advertising	Miscellaneous
October . . . . .	203	207	289	24	9	93
November . . . . .	192	259	258	22	10	102
December . . . . .	202	223	311	27	7	72
January . . . . .	195	245	295	28	8	68
February . . . . .	203	257	261	29	3	53
March . . . . .	246	223	270	31	30	81
April . . . . .	212	228	262	38	5	75
May . . . . .	185	151	251	47	1	86
June . . . . .	203	107	256	44	7	87
July . . . . .	207	118	258	27	23	157
August . . . . .	196	164	249	34	9	115
September . . . . .	232	210	264	41	17	86
Totals . . . . .	2,476	2,392	3,224	392	129	1,075

**MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS**  
**RECORD OF PROSECUTIONS FOR YEAR 1930-1931**

DATE	TITLE OF FILM	WHERE EXHIBITED	NATURE OF OFFENSE	IMPOSED FINE
November 25, 1930 . . .	Rio Rita . . . . .	Realart Theatre . . .	No Seal . . . . .	\$5.00
June 10, 1931 . . . . .	Night Owls . . . . .	Nemo Theatre . . . . .	No Seal . . . . .	5.00